

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice CRP-353

For: State Offices and Service Centers

General Information for CRP Signup 20

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Overview

**A
Background**

CRP signup period 20 is scheduled for January 18, 2000, through February 11, 2000, to accept offers of environmentally sensitive acreage for new 10- to 15-year contracts to cost-effectively enroll acreage for program year 2001.

The continuous signup provisions will continue to be offered during the general signup 20 period. For program administration purposes, the continuous signup number will change from signup 19 to signup 21 for CRP-1's offered on or after October 1, 1999.

No decision has been made about the number of acres to be enrolled during signup 20. The number of acres accepted will be determined after signup 20 concludes based on the environmental benefits and the cost of the acres offered. It is anticipated that the CRP offer process for signup 20 will continue to be highly competitive. The national EBI cutoff score will be determined after the signup concludes. The signup 20 EBI cutoff score may be equal to, higher than, or lower than the cutoff score for previous signups.

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Disposal Date	Distribution
June 1, 2000	State Offices; State Offices relay to Service Centers and NRCS State Offices; FS, 80; CSREES, 5

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1 Overview (Continued)

B

Setting Priorities Workload activity for FSA and NRCS will be significant in certain areas because of the number of acres anticipated to be offered for enrollment or reenrollment. State Offices and Service Centers shall set workload priorities and plan office activities accordingly.

C

Purpose This notice provides information about:

- the signup process
 - eligible land
 - submitting offers
 - effective dates of signup 20 CRP-1's
 - requesting cost-share
 - rejecting ineligible offers
 - other general information.
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2 Process Summary

A

Signup Activities The following table describes general signup and offers selection activities.

Note: See 2-CRP, Part 6, paragraph 112.

Step	Action
1	General signup 20 will be held concurrently with continuous signup 21. Service Centers may accept offers of acreage for signup 20 from January 18, 2000, through February 11, 2000.
2	<p>NRCS will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delineate acreage offered that is suitable and eligible for signup 20• inform producers that the acreage may be eligible for immediate approval under the continuous signup process. <p>Note: Acreage offered for continuous signup will be automatically accepted provided all eligibility requirements are met. See 2-CRP, paragraph 98.</p>

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2 Process Summary (Continued)

A Signup Activities (Continued)

Step	Action
3	<p>Producers will be provided a maximum payment rate developed using CRP-2 before a CRP-1 is submitted.</p> <p>FSA County Offices will provide copies of the applicable National ranking plan (Signup 20 Environmental Benefits Index Fact Sheet) to all producers submitting offers.</p> <p>Note: For signup 20, State ranking plans are not authorized.</p> <p>Producers shall be notified that the following may enhance the acceptability of the offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offering only the most environmentally sensitive acreage for enrollment • planting an approved mixture of covers that benefit wildlife • enhancing the existing cover to provide an approved mixture that benefits wildlife • lowering the offer amount below the maximum payment rate • developing a permanent water source for wildlife on the acreage offered • restoring wetlands on the site • establishment of wildlife food plots • establishing cover that will provide enduring benefits past the life of CRP-1 • declining available C/S.
4	<p>Producers may request eligibility determination scenarios from FSA and NRCS to find configurations that best suit the producer's objectives. Multiple scenarios may be requested given the unique Soil Rental Rates that are offered for each eligible soil type and the varying potential for production flexibility contract acreage reductions caused by enrolling a different amount of cropland into CRP.</p>

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2 Process Summary (Continued)

A Signup Activities (Continued)

Step	Action
5	<p>During signup:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FSA County Offices and NRCS Field Offices will make all eligibility, ranking score, soils data, and related determinations, and complete CRP-2 for eligible offers <p>Note: A PC-based fillable CRP-1 and CRP-2 is being developed and is scheduled for release in December. The fillable forms should reduce County Office workload in completing the applicable data. Additional information will be provided in a future notice when the forms are available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NRCS shall determine and record the National ranking factors and subfactors on CRP-2 and return CRP-2 to FSA County Office for entry in the System/36 CRP software FSA County Offices shall enter data from CRP-2 in the System/36 CRP software as soon as data is available. <p>Important: The information entered into the System/36 CRP software is used by the National Office to monitor signup activity by identifying EBI scoring errors and inconsistencies between State and Counties. FSA County Offices must not delay entry of completed offers into System/36 CRP software.</p> <p>Note: For signup 20, State ranking plans are not authorized.</p>
6	<p>By March 8, 2000, FSA County Offices shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enter all eligible offer records into the System/36 CRP software transmit all eligible offer records to the State Office. <p>Important: Only eligible offers shall be entered into the System/36 CRP software and transmitted to the State Office. Offers that do not meet all the eligibility requirements, such as the 12-month ownership requirement, shall not be entered into the System/36 CRP software.</p> <p>When received, State Offices shall immediately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the data for errors if needed, have Service Centers correct errors and retransmit the records to the State Office.

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2 Process Summary (Continued)

A Signup Activities (Continued)

Step	Action
7	<p>By March 13, 2000, State Offices shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transmit all eligible offer records for all Service Centers to KCMO, according to 1-CRP telephone Karen McGinnis, KCMO, at 816-926-2164, to notify KCMO when offer file transmissions are being sent or notify KCMO of a negative report.
8	<p>After signup, CEPD and KCMO shall review transmitted files and distribute questionable records to the applicable State Offices to review for correction, if appropriate, and retransmission to KCMO.</p> <p>Within the time period permitted, State Offices shall make corrections, when applicable, and retransmit offer records to KCMO.</p>
9	<p>After the files have been corrected, points for the cost factor will be assigned by the National Office for each record based on the offer amount submitted and if cost share is requested on CRP-2.</p> <p>Note: Incorrect or incomplete information on either CRP-1 or CRP-2 will lead to delays and possible errors.</p>
10	CEPD and KCMO shall rank all eligible offers based on the National ranking plan.
11	<p>DAFP will issue a CRP notice to State Offices and Service Centers to provide whether the offer was acceptable or rejected. The notice will include provisions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> handling records omitted from the transmission that are later determined eligible for participation transmitted records that contain erroneous data handling appeals.

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2 Process Summary (Continued)

B

Using Registers

COC's may approve a register of producers at the county level as of COB on the final date for submitting offers, if needed, according to 2-CRP, paragraph 152.

3 Eligible Land Criteria

A

Cropland Eligibility Criteria

For signup 20, eligible cropland includes cropland that is both of the following:

- planted, COC-approved prevented planted, or considered planted for CAB protection to an agricultural commodity during any 2 of the crop years 1995 through 1999

Important: For signup 20, acreage for which the producer received a crop insurance indemnity payment for prevented planting shall be considered planted for that year for CRP cropping history purposes.

Note: Field margins that are incidental to the planting of crops, such as turn rows, field borders, and center pivot corners, are eligible to be offered. Field margins do not include other areas within a field.

- physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity, as determined by COC.

For signup 20 only, the following acreage that was enrolled in CRP may be offered for re-enrollment if all other eligibility requirements are met:

- acreage devoted to trees that expired on September 30, 1999

Important: Acreage that was enrolled in CRP devoted to trees that expired on September 30, 1997, or September 30, 1998, is **not** eligible for enrollment in signup 20.

- acreage devoted to grass that expired on September 30, 1997, September 30, 1998, or September 30, 1999.

Note: This does not include acreage that was enrolled in CRP in signups 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, or 21.

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3 Eligible Land Criteria (Continued)

A

Cropland Eligibility Criteria (Continued)

For signup 20, acreage currently enrolled in CRP that expires September 30, 2000, may be offered for enrollment only if the effective program year of CRP-1 is 2001. This acreage shall not be eligible for an effective program year other than 2001. Acreage currently enrolled in CRP that is scheduled to expire any time after September 30, 2000, is not eligible to be offered for signup 20.

Existing CRP acreage is not automatically eligible to be offered. For signup 20, existing CRP acreage is only eligible to be offered when the offered acreage meets both of the following:

- scheduled to expire from CRP-1 on September 30, 2000
- 1 or more of the land eligibility categories in 2-CRP, subparagraph 82 B.

Neither the type of cover existing on CRP acreage nor the practices identified on the current CRP-1 prohibit the acreage from being offered. Contracts accepted under signup 20 are new contracts and are subject to 1-PL. The early termination provisions do **not** apply to contracts accepted under signup 20.

Cropland acreage enrolled in CRP maintains its eligible cropland status while under CRP-1. Therefore, COC is not required to determine whether acreage currently enrolled in CRP:

- has been planted to an agricultural commodity in 2 of the crop years 1995 through 1999
- is physically capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

Note: Cropland acreage must still be legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. See 2-CRP, paragraph 82.

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3 Eligible Land Criteria (Continued)

B

Cropped Wetlands/ Cropland Associated to Noncropped Wetlands

Cropland designated as cropped wetlands, as determined by NRCS, including adjacent upland acreage not to exceed 6 times the area of the cropped wetland, is eligible for enrollment in CRP.

The amount of the adjacent upland acreage to be enrolled shall be determined by NRCS. The amount of the adjacent upland acres:

- is limited to the minimum number of acres required to provide a protective buffer to the cropped wetland
- may be less than the 6 to 1 ratio
- shall not exceed the 6 to 1 ratio.

Producers may offer more acreage than the minimum required to protect the cropped wetland; however, any acreage offered in excess of the minimum required to protect the cropped wetland, not to exceed the 6 to 1 ratio, must meet 1 of the other land eligibility criteria in 2-CRP, subparagraph 82 B.

Example: Producer offers to enroll 8 acres to be devoted to CP23 (2 acre cropped wetland and 6 adjacent upland acres). NRCS determines that a 2 to 1 ratio (4.0 acres) is the minimum acreage required to protect the cropped wetland. The 6 adjacent upland acres are within the maximum 6 to 1 ratio; however, they exceed the minimum acreage required to protect the cropped wetland. Therefore, 2 acres must meet one of the other land eligibility criteria in 2-CRP, subparagraph 82 B.

Prior converted wetland acreage previously under expired or expiring CRP-1 that was enrolled during signup 8 or 9 as CP9, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife; CP14, Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands; or State practice, CP14A, Bottomland Hardwood Natural Regeneration, may be eligible for enrollment **only as CP23**. Such acreage is considered to meet the land eligibility criteria for cropped wetlands. **No associated acreage shall be eligible for enrollment.**

C

WBP Acres

Land enrolled in WBP scheduled to expire December 31, 2000, is eligible for enrollment in CRP if all other eligibility requirements are met.

Note: The WBP agreement must be terminated before CRP-1 effective date.

Important: For signup 20 only, land that was enrolled in WBP that expired December 31, 1999, may be offered for enrollment provided the land has remained unchanged and all other eligibility requirements are met.

4 Submitting Offers for Signup 20

A

Both CRP-1 and CRP-2 Required

Both CRP-1 and CRP-2 must be completed and signed by at least 1 **eligible** producer before the end of the signup period to be considered an offer.
Submission of either CRP-1 or CRP-2 alone does not constitute an offer.

If **both** CRP-1 and CRP-2 are not completed and signed by at least 1 **eligible** producer before the end of the signup period, the Service Center **must not** enter the data in the System/36 CRP software for transmission to the State Office.

Separate CRP-1's must be completed for:

- each CRP-2
- practices with different lifespans.

Example: Producer offers 5 acres of CP10 with a 10-year lifespan and 20 acres of CP3A with a 15-year lifespan on the same tract. Only 1 CRP-2 is completed for the offer. Separate CRP-1's must be completed for each practice.

B

Required Signatures on CRP-1 and CRP-2 for Transmission

Only 1 signature of an **eligible** producer is required on CRP-1 and CRP-2 by the end of the signup period to submit and transmit an eligible offer for signup 20.

Note: See 2-CRP, paragraphs 154 and 155, for required signatures.

C

Submitting Offers by Tract

Producers shall submit only 1 offer per tract per program year. Offers must be submitted on a tract basis. Multi-tracts shall **not** be used for submitting CRP offers. See 2-CRP, paragraph 154.

Note: For signup 20, the program year for all approved CRP-1's shall be 2001.

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5 Effective Dates of CRP-1's for Signup 20

A

**CRP-1 Effective
Dates**

For signup 20, the effective date of **all** approved CRP-1's shall be October 1, 2000.

6 Cost-Share Provisions

A

**Requesting
Cost-Share**

Producers must determine, at the time the offer is submitted, to either request, if available, or decline cost-share assistance.

The revised CRP-2 for signup 20 will provide a “Yes” and “No” box to indicate if the producer requests or declines cost-share assistance.

The producer must check either the “Yes” or “No” box before signing the CRP-2.

EBI scores will be based on the information provided on CRP-2.

Producers that check the “NO” box will be ineligible for cost share assistance if the offer is accepted regardless of the EBI score.

The revised CRP-2 and instructions will be issued in a future amendment to 2-CRP.

B

**Cost-Share for
Open Areas
Within CP3 and
CP11**

For CP3, Tree Planting, and CP11, Vegetative Cover - Trees - Already Established, only, cost-share is authorized to plant native grasses and/or shrub plantings best suited for wildlife in the area within the 15 to 20 percent open areas. To be eligible for C\S, the open areas must be planted to a 50 point cover of approved native grasses and/or shrubs best suited for wildlife in the area.

Natural regeneration of native grass vegetation with required maintenance may be permitted within the open area if it is consistent with NRCS technical standards and has been concurred with by State FWS or U.S. FWS officials.

Notes: Cost-share is **not** authorized for natural regeneration of native grass vegetation within the 15 to 20 percent open areas.

2-CRP and software will be changed to allow cost-share for certain components for CP11.

7 Notifying Producers of Ineligible Offers

A

Rejecting Ineligible Offers

COC shall **immediately** notify producers who submit an ineligible offer that the offer is rejected using CRP-26. See 2-CRP, Exhibit 12.

Ineligible offers include, but are not limited to, offers:

- for land physically located in a county that has reached or exceeded the 25 percent cropland limitation, unless the county has a waiver approved by **DAFP before** signup 20 begins

Note: Ineligible offers shall be **immediately** rejected regardless of whether a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation will be requested.

- from producers that do not meet the 12-month ownership/operatorship requirement

Note: Ineligible offers shall be **immediately** rejected regardless of whether a waiver of the 12-month ownership/operatorship requirement will be requested.

- that have a rental rate per acre offered that exceeds the maximum payment rate for the land offered
- for land that does not meet the cropland eligibility criteria. See 2-CRP, paragraph 82.

Service Centers shall **not** transmit offers to the State Office that have been determined ineligible by COC.

8 Other Issues

A

Contract Acreage Limitation

Before completing CRP-2, the Service Center shall ensure that the total CRP and AMTA contract acreage does not exceed the available agricultural use acres on the farm.

If the total AMTA contract acres and the CRP acres, excluding any marginal pastureland, such as WBP noncropland acres or riparian buffers planted to trees, based on the effective dates of the CRP contracts, exceeds the available agricultural use acres for the farm, the producer shall reduce the acres being offered for enrollment in CRP or the AMTA contract acres. See 2-CRP, paragraph 196.

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8 Other Issues (Continued)

B

New Forms

CRP-2 has been revised for signup 20. The revised CRP-2 added a “YES/NO” block to indicate if cost-share assistance is requested for any of the practices offered.

Producers must either request, if available, or decline cost-share assistance on the CRP-2. The points awarded for EBI subfactor N7b will be determined based on the CRP-2.

In addition, a “Yes/No” block has been added to determine if FS will have technical responsibility for any of the practices offered.

Notes: For signup 20, Service Centers shall use CRP-2, dated September 14, 1999. COC’s shall destroy old versions of CRP-2.

For signup 20, CRP-1 will not be revised, however, new instructions will be developed. For signup 20, Service Centers shall use CRP-1, dated January 30, 1997.

A new CRP-1 (Appendix) will be developed for signup 20.

Note: Do not destroy old versions of CRP-1 (Appendix).

Both CRP-1 (Appendix) and CRP-2 will be available on the BBS when procedure for signup 20 is issued.

C

**Measurement
Service**

Producers may request a paid-for measurement service to determine acres to be offered. A paid-for measurement service must be completed for acreage offered before CRP-1 is approved. See 2-CRP, paragraph 223, for exceptions.

D

**Documenting
HEL Evaluations
for CRP
Purposes**

HEL evaluations that are completed by NRCS for CRP purposes upon request of the producer will not be considered redefinition of the area for HELC purposes, according to 6-CP.

HEL determinations for fields or portions of a field evaluated for CRP purposes, using the weighted EI of 8 or greater method, shall **not** be recorded on the official aerial photography, according to 2-CP and 6-CP.

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8 Other Issues (Continued)

E

Letter to CRP Participants

For signup 18, Service Centers sent a letter and signup 18 fact sheet to all participants with CRP-1's that were scheduled to expire on September 30, 1999.

For signup 20, to alleviate Service Center workload, KCMO will prepare and send a letter and signup 20 fact sheet to all participants with CRP-1's that are scheduled to expire on September 30, 2000.

F

Natural Regeneration

CRP provisions, that are agreed to by NRCS at the national level, govern administration of CRP. NRCS practice codes may exceed CRP goals or authority. Therefore, regardless of the NRCS practice code standards, natural regeneration is only authorized for certain land to be devoted to CP22, and within open areas of CP3 and CP11.

9 Action

A

State Office Action

State Offices shall:

- immediately provide copies of this notice to Service Centers
- immediately review this notice with State NRCS Office
- make CRP signup 20 a high priority when setting workload priorities and scheduling office activities
- ensure that all counties that have reached or exceed the 25 percent cropland limitation or meet the criteria in 2-CRP, paragraph 255, that wish to conduct general signup 20 for land physically located within the county have been approved for a waiver of the 25 percent cropland limitation **by DAFP before** signup 20 begins

Note: See Notices CRP-345 and CRP-350.

- ensure that all Service Centers have the correct forms and information needed to conduct signup 20
 - review 2-CRP, paragraph 139, to prepare for signup 20.
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9 Action (Continued)

B

Service Center Action

Service Centers shall:

- make CRP signup 20 a high priority when setting workload priorities and scheduling office activities
 - announce signup 20, according to 2-CRP, paragraphs 151 and 255
 - review 2-CRP, Part 6, before signup 20 begins
 - ensure that **only eligible** offers are entered in the System/36 CRP software for transmission to the State Office
 - provide a copy of the signup 20 EBI fact sheet to all producers submitting an offer.
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C

NRCS National Office Concurrence

NRCS has concurred with this notice.
